

**Refugee Working Group
Recommendations
to
Governor Huntsman
and
Mayor Corroon**

RECOMMENDATION #1

ADDRESSING STRUCTURAL GAPS

Utah's population is growing and diversifying at a rapid rate. Twenty percent of Utah's population growth is foreign-born. Eleven percent of the foreign-born are refugees. The way in which the existing structure in the State deals with its new populations needs to be updated and improved. By establishing a viable system to serve refugees, our state positions itself to successfully incorporate all of its foreign-born newcomers.

Refugee groups resettled in Salt Lake County have changed drastically since the last time Utah held planning meetings for its refugee population --1999. The refugees resettled in the 1990s were primarily Eastern Europeans, relatively familiar with western culture. The refugees resettled since 2000 are more diversified with smaller populations, predominately from Africa (Somali, Somali Bantu, Sudanese, Liberian, Sierra Leonean, etc.), with smaller numbers from the Middle East and South Asia (Afghani, Meskhetian Turk). These refugees are from cultures very different from that of the United States; have typically spent many years in refugee camps before arriving in the U.S.; and are often illiterate in their own languages.

Currently, the refugee groups arriving to Utah are Burmese and Burundi who have been 'warehoused' in refugee camps for up to 15 or more years. These new refugee groups are comprised of large, extended, multi-generation and multi-family units. The size of a typical case ranges from 6 to 10 or more people; several of these cases may be related as extended family. The preservation of these families requires larger housing units, which are currently in extremely short supply, preferably in close proximity to each other. Relative to the refugees of the 1990s, the current population is far more challenging to resettle and requires significantly more services. In addition, the refugees already resettled continue to face unique barriers that require a renewed effort and stronger structure.

First and foremost, the Refugee Working Group believes that the power of Utah's refugee services coordinating office should be increased. Utah's current State Refugee Coordinator's office is positioned deep within the Department of Workforce Services, has two fulltime staff, and is charged primarily with managing federal refugee money.

To be effective, the State's refugee services entity must be given the power to effectively represent the interests of refugees to state government and to Utah's public and private sectors. It must have the flexibility and status to raise private, state, and corporate

resources in order to supplement inadequate federal monies, as is done in Colorado and Illinois, among other places.

The Refugee Working Group respectfully recommends that the Governor establish an ***Office of Refugee Services*** to provide leadership in service coordination, policy review, accountability, advocacy, and resource development and management for essential services to refugees in the State of Utah.

It is believed that such an action would be a significant step in addressing structural gaps identified and articulated by the Refugee Working Group. An ***Office of Refugee Services*** should be empowered to directly address the array of concerns, gaps and recommendations attached.

The Refugee Working Group agrees that creating an ***Office of Refugee Services*** would best serve the refugee population at the appropriate level of State government warranted for the identified needs in our state. The following are two options for consideration.

Option 1

Position the ***Office of Refugee Services*** within the Department of Workforce Services, but at a higher level within the organizational structure. It is noted that having the ***Office of Refugee Services*** within the Department of Workforce Services has the potential for operational cost sharing benefits when taking into consideration the current State Refugee Coordinator has been working within this Department and cost centers already exist. The Department is also involved in many critical services for refugees and has demonstrated the ability to respond to the employment and benefit needs of refugees.

Option 2

Position the ***Office of Refugee Services*** within the Department of Community and Culture. It is noted that a benefit of positioning the ***Office of Refugee Services*** within the Department of Community and Culture includes providing an independent office which can embrace a broad perspective in addressing refugee issues. The Department already addresses many community and cultural issues that are relevant for the refugee population.

It is further recommended that the ***Office of Refugee Services*** be given the task of specifically addressing the gaps, service issues and recommendations identified by the Refugee Working Group in the attached document.

The key functions for this office are summarized in the following table (please refer to attached list of gaps and recommendations for more specifics).

SUMMARY	
Recommendation #1 STRUCTURE	❖ Establish an <i>Office of Refugee Services</i> to:
<p>KEY FUNCTIONS</p> <p>General oversight responsibility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Effectively represent refugee issues within state government ➤ Fill identified structural gaps which impede service delivery to refugees ➤ Provide visible leadership regarding refugee issues at the State level ➤ Advocate for quality refugee services ➤ Coordinate services among providers and local governments ➤ Provide access to community and stakeholders for policy decision making ➤ Seek additional funding resources to fill identified gaps ➤ Provide public education regarding refugee issues ➤ Directly address specific recommendations and gaps identified by the Refugee Working Group ➤ Work with the State Refugee Coordinating Committee to educate, plan, and seek legislative funding for the improvement of refugee services ➤ Monitor and evaluate service provider's performance ➤ Manage federal monies and represent Utah's interests with federal funders and policy makers

RECOMMENDATION #2

ADDRESSING ACCOUNTABILITY

The Refugee Working Group respectfully recommends that an independent evaluation process be established at the State level to ensure refugee services are meeting the needs of the refugee populations and a mechanism to ensure accountability is in place. This evaluation process can be facilitated by the establishment of a *State Refugee Coordinating Committee appointed by the Governor and* staffed by the *Office of Refugee Services*.

The *State Refugee Coordinating Committee* will need to meet at least quarterly to consider standards for services, annually monitor the performances of refugee service providers (i.e., agencies receiving federal and state monies targeted for refugee services), and make recommendations to the Governor, the Legislature and local governments regarding service delivery system efficacy.

This committee should consist of representatives from the refugee community, state government offices, legislators, refugee service providers and other community leaders, and be appointed by the Governor.

It is further recommended that the Governor and Mayor make a formal request to service providers and state and local agencies accessed by refugees to embrace the body of concerns and recommendations articulated in the attached list of service gaps identified by the Refugee Working Group.

Each entity should be asked to report back to the *Office of Refugee Services*, the steps they intend to take to fill and/or reduce the identified gaps that are within the scope of their services. The Refugee Working Group realizes that a concerted effort on the part of government, private sector, service providers and participants is required if accountability is to be effectual.

This “good faith effort” request to service providers at all levels will be an additional step to encourage all parties to hold themselves accountable for the successful delivery of services to refugees in our State. In addition, it will serve as an indicator of what can be expected in the near future by the stakeholders involved.

SUMMARY	
Recommendation #2A ACCOUNTABILITY	❖ Create a <i>State Refugee Coordination Committee</i>
KEY FUNCTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provide independent evaluation of refugee services and needs ➤ Consider standards for services and make recommendations ➤ Increase involvement of stakeholders in decision making processes ➤ Educate the Legislature and other policymakers and key stakeholders on the issues included in this report and the recommendation to overcome these issues

Recommendation #2B ACCOUNTABILITY	❖ Request <i>Good Faith Effort</i> responses from service providers, including state, county and private, to address identified gaps and needs within their current capacity to serve the communities in the State.
KEY FUNCTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increase accountability by agencies/providers ➤ Ensure agencies/service providers become aware of gaps and concerns expressed in Refugee Working Group document ➤ Assess willingness and capacity of agencies/providers to respond to identified gaps

RECOMMENDATION #3

ADDRESSING FUNDING GAPS

Federal refugee funding alone cannot adequately support refugee services. States with the most viable refugee support systems have found innovative ways to bring private, corporate, and state money to bear. Led by an empowered *Office of Refugee Services* and the State Refugee Coordinating Committee, both of which are described above, it is recommended that the Governor appoint a *Refugee Services Funding Task Force* made up of corporate, foundation, and government leaders.

The purpose of this *Refugee Services Funding Task Force* is two fold:

1) during the interim period while the *State Refugee Coordinating Committee* is assembled, the *Refugee Services Funding Task Force* would develop a strategic plan to seek funding from the State Legislature in 2008 to commit State funds to address critical service gaps identified in the attached document, and,

2) the *Refugee Services Funding Task Force* would seek private money to address some of the most pressing needs identified, and in doing so need to establish a Refugee Fund.

Part of the *Refugee Services Funding Task Force's* charge would be to take an inventory of current federal, state, and private support for refugee services. We recommend that the *Refugee Services Funding Task Force* request specific funding to address the needs identified by stakeholders, departments and service providers to fill specific gaps identified in this document. The Task Force will develop an immediate process to assist the Department during the formation the new *Office of Refugee Services* to include minimal policy recommendations, first year budget, and priorities for the transition and first year of operation. Ongoing work of the *Refugee Services Funding Task Force* will include developing and working to secure a long term funding strategy to meet the service needs identified by the Refugee Working Group. This long-term strategy must take into consideration current funding allocation processes, shifting of priorities and emerging needs.

The need for education, particularly English Language Learning (ELL) and vocational training programs, case management services, child care, services for elderly refugees, transportation, health care, mental health, and housing resounded. Strategic planning to meet these needs should be a top priority of the *Office of Refugee Services*.

SUMMARY	
Recommendation #3 FUNDING	❖ Quickly appoint a <i>Refugee Services Funding Task Force</i>
KEY FUNCTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Conduct inventory of current funding levels and needs for refugee services in the State ➤ Develop short-term strategic plan to seek funds from the State Legislature in 2008 ➤ Establish Refugee Fund and seek private support to address most critical needs identified ➤ Identify administrative and policy changes that allow existing dollars to be reallocated to improve services to refugees ➤ Develop long-term strategy to meet funding needs to fill gaps in services to refugees (assign to <i>Office of Refugee Services</i>).

RECOMMENDATION #4

ADDRESSING CAPACITY NEEDS

The Refugee Working Group identified the critical need for and long-term benefit of capacity building, both for groups formed by refugees, called mutual assistance associations (MAAs), and for refugee service providers within the State. The Refugee Working Group respectfully recommends that funding priorities be given to 1) building the capacity for refugee support/mutual assistance organizations (MAA) to develop and become independent, viable organizations, and 2) for service providers to build service capacity to meet the gaps and needs identified by the Refugee Working Group, as well as emerging needs in years to come.

This capacity building includes support of initiatives which provide technical support for the viable development of MAAs, increase refugees' participation in decision making processes, increase the cultural competency of service providers (governmental and private), increase capacity of interpretive services, and support empowerment processes and innovative programs to meet the needs identified.

SUMMARY	
Recommendation #4A CAPACITY	❖ Prioritize funding for initiatives which provide support to MAAs to build viable independent associations.
KEY FUNCTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increase refugee participation in decision making processes ➤ Provide resources to strengthen refugee organizations if needed, to become more competent in fiscal and other management responsibilities ➤ Assist refugee and potential refugee organizations to become self-reliant and further promote refugee business developments
Recommendation #4B CAPACITY	❖ Prioritize funding for initiatives which provide support for refugee service providers to build their capacity to serve refugees and meet the gaps identified.
KEY FUNCTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provide additional capacity building support to refugee organizations seeking to fill gaps identified ➤ Increase cultural competency of service providers and community partners ➤ Increase interpretive services capacity ➤ Increase empowerment processes within refugee services ➤ Support innovative programs and best practices to meet the needs identified

RECOMMENDATION #5

ADDRESSING SOCIAL SERVICES AND OTHER CONCERNS

The Refugee Working Group respectfully recommends that each Department within the State and Salt Lake County government be requested to review the list of gaps and concerns articulated by the Refugee Working Group and identify strategies and limitations to close the specific gaps addressed within their department's mission and capacity.

In addition, it is recommended that each voluntary agency serving refugees be requested to review the list of gaps and concerns articulated by the Refugee Working Group and identify strategies and limitations to close the specific gaps addressed within their agency's mission and capacity.

It is further recommended that through an office, such as the recommended *Office of Refugee Services*, a comprehensive service delivery system be mapped out, identifying service strategies and capacities to reduce the gaps in services.

SUMMARY	
Recommendation #5A SOCIAL SERVICES AND OTHER CONCERNS	❖ Request each State and County Department to review and identify strategies and capacities to address service gaps identified by the Refugee Working Group
KEY FUNCTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Identify current government program's capacity and adjustments that can be made to address specific gaps ➤ Request administrative policies or procedures be assessed and changed when possible to increase support to refugee services ➤ Increase awareness of gaps in refugee service among governmental entities
Recommendation #5B SOCIAL SERVICES AND OTHER CONCERNS	❖ Request each refugee service provider (receiving federal, state, or private monies to serve refugees) to review and identify strategies and capacities to address service gaps identified by the Refugee Working Group
KEY FUNCTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Identify current private sector programs' capacity and adjustments that can be made to address specific gaps ➤ Increase awareness of gaps among private sector providers
Recommendation #5C SOCIAL SERVICES AND OTHER CONCERNS	❖ Assign entity (such as recommended <i>Office of Refugee Services</i>) to map out refugee service delivery system and potential capacity to address specific gaps identified by the Refugee Working Group.
KEY FUNCTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provide mechanism to increase awareness of actual program delivery levels and current capacities within the refugee service delivery system ➤ Provide starting reference point from which service improvement in service delivery system can be implemented